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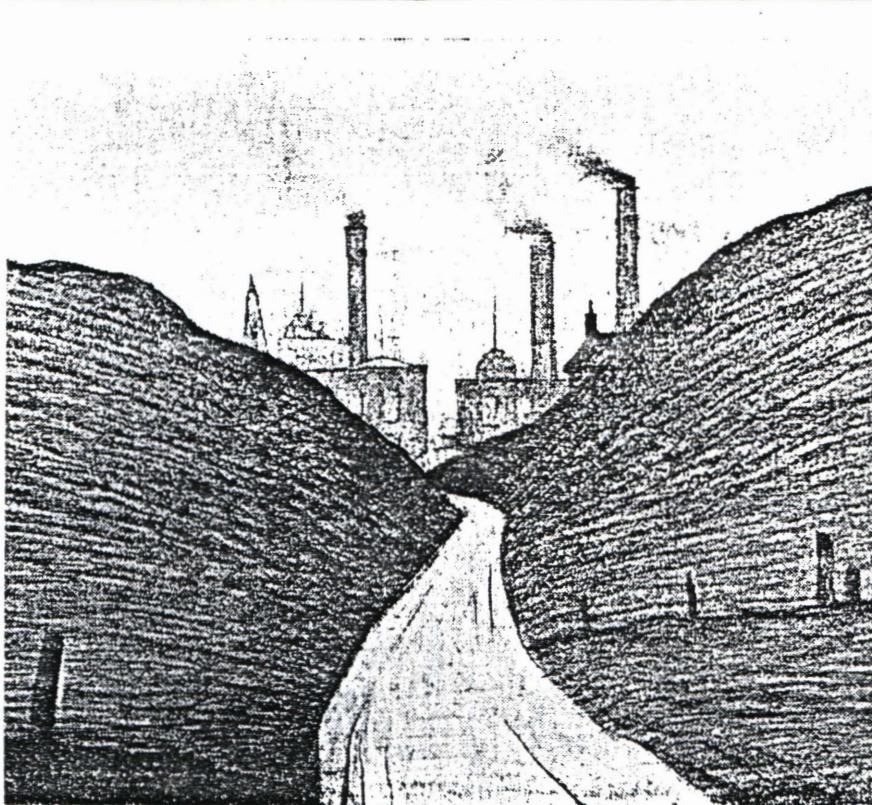
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(Apologies to L S Lowry)

LYON'S SCORNAUX HOUSE

Each year for the last three years a group of French ufologists have organised a conference at Lyon. The third such *Rencontres de Lyon* was attended by your editor. Apart from being an opportunity to renew acquaintances with many of the French colleagues whom I knew from the Anglo-French 'Channel Port' conferences, it gave an opportunity to meet many members of the various local groups in France. Charles de Gaulle once said that it was impossible to govern a country which had 300 different sorts of cheese. Similarly, it would seem to be impossible to organise a centralised UFO group in France - and French ufology is the better for it, as the various local groups have a vigour which is missing from much of British ufology.

This is shown often in the high standard of publications produced by the groups. The conference organisers, AESV, produce *Ovni Présence*, a publication of such quality, both in production and editorial, that it is hard to imagine it is not produced by a major commercial publishing

company - it is certainly streets ahead of anything we produce in the UK. Less professionally produced, but just as impressive, are the detailed investigations of local groups such as Groupe 5255 which operates in north-west France. The Fortean orientated *Pogonip* continues to publish well-produced booklets on modern myths and rumours.

Evident at the meeting was the continuing division between European and American ufology, as outlined by Eduardo Russo and Gian Grassini in the last *Magonia* (both of whom were present at Lyon). Bill Moore of MJ12 and Roswell fame outlined the progress of his recent investigations to a sceptical, if polite, audience. European ufologists are worried that (with the partial exception of abductions) American ufology now seems to be concerned almost entirely with the alleged actions of the US Government. Moore is a pleasant and sceptical individual, who if he ever leaves ufology, would surely find his vocation as a hard-bitten LA-style private eye. He was well able to take

Continued on back page

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PETER ROGERSON'S NORTHERN ECHOES

I cannot let this column go by without declaring my support for Salman Rushdie. My guess is that there is more than one *Magonia* reader who could quite easily end up in the same boat, and not just from Moslems. Strange ideas have been expressed by some so-called progressives, somewhat to the effect that people whose parents happen to have been born in Pakistan or Bangladesh do not have the basic human right to adopt the religion or philosophy of their choice. What would Messrs Vaz and Madden have to say if Spanish Catholics were to reintroduce the stake and the rack as integral parts of Catholic Iberian Culture?

It's not just Islam, of course, which has become caught up in the wave of medievalist barbarism prophesied by Jerry Clark and Loren Coleman back in 1975 when they wrote that the official philosophies of our age have "denied [man] the capacity for belief in the magical, the wonderful. It has destroyed the mystical, non-rational elements which traditionally tied him to nature and his fellows... emphasised rationality to the exclusion of intuition, equations to the exclusion of dreams, male to the exclusion of female, machines to the exclusion of mysteries... there is a dangerous imbalance which will lead to a reaction in which... nature will have its way, the collective unconscious too long

repressed will burst free, overwhelm the world and usher in an era of madness, superstition and terror... a new spiritual dark-age will blanket the earth..." One might expect that reaction to start in areas where the global civilization of bourgeois political economy has been most recently grafted on.

In the United States this reaction took the form of the world-hating, destroy-the-lot apocalyptic fundamentalism which propelled Ronnie to power. A number of cultural commentators have linked apocalypticism with extreme forms of suicidal depressive psychosis, with paranoid projection taking it from 'I'm so bad I deserve to die and rot in hell', to 'the whole world is so bad it deserves to die'. Others see apocalypticism as a means of self-advancement: 'If all these sinners were out of the way, I'd be really someone!'

Today there is a genuine 'flying saucer psychosis' in the USA. Let's give it a Latin name however: 'sublimated xenophobic paranoia'. Its diagnosis runs thus: Lots of people in the US have deep seated fears about Hispanics taking over their country, but many, especially those with superficial liberal political attitudes are deeply ashamed to admit this. Therefore they project their fears on an ultimate alien. This 'alien nation' is in the deserts, the wild, deserted, no-good places in the Hispanic areas of the USA. There is also a great tie-in with the chronic ambivalence about the American nation shown in much folklore and media lore: on the one hand the USA is God's sacred garden, yet for individuals, things can go wrong. John Lear and his colleagues are now filing a witchcraft suit against the American government, claiming that those elected to protect the garden have formed a secret, Faustian pact with the forces of darkness, in exchange for worldly power and knowledge. They claim that the grey meanies of this fantasy, out in the desert like Pandemonium in Blish's *Black Easter*, are blood-sucking demons who possess and control people through implants (the chief schizophrenic fantasy which arises as a rationalisation of the acute helplessness and Continued on page 11).



N MAGONIA (August 1988) Peter Rogerson writes that ufologists must accept that as recorders of stories we are in effect folklorists, and this is how our writings may be regarded by historians centuries to come. He adds that "the dominant folklore in British ufology at the moment appears to be earthlights or spooklights... the powerful appeal of this concept lies in its romantic roots. It is a folklore of open spaces, where tales still survive of the eerie secrets of wild nature, before TV and streetlights robbed them of their wonder..."

These words have a particular poignancy in reference to the strange story I am about to relate, for despite the advent of "TV and streetlights" which Peter regards as stripping nature of its wonders, folklore seems very much to be in the making in the haunted areas of the Pennine hills into which I have been wandering in recent years.

FROM MY PENNINE VALLEY NOTEBOOK

DAVID CLARKE

For example, on 27 September 1987 the *Sheffield Star*, in a front-page article entitled "'Ghost' sightings on a new road", described a series of weird happenings said to have taken place on the Stocksbridge by-pass road then under construction by the McAlpine construction company to the north-west of Sheffield.

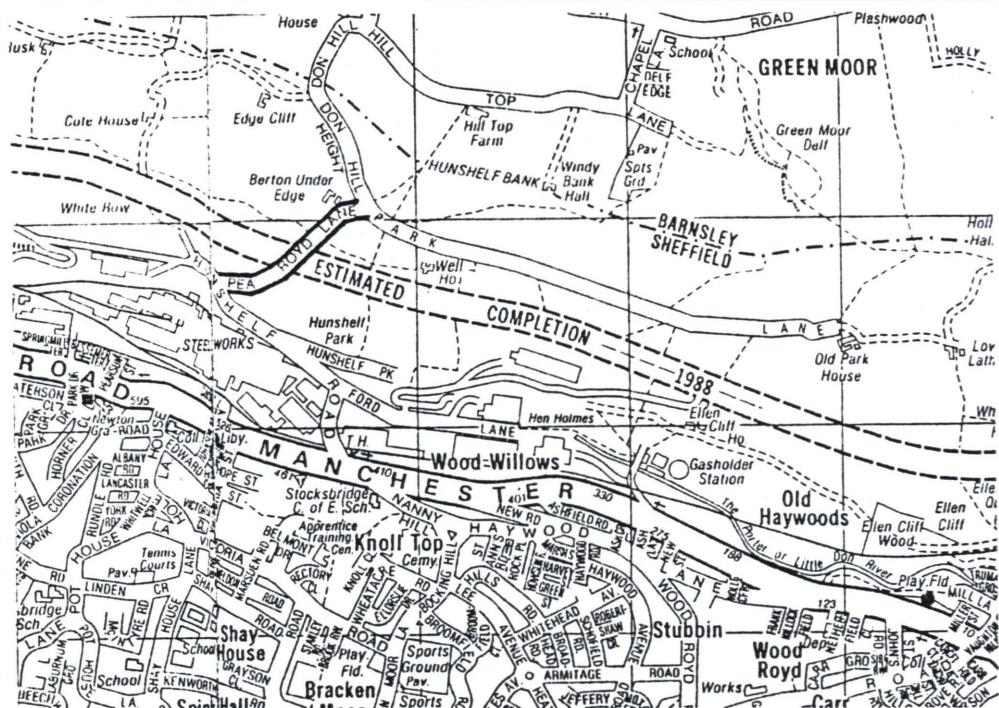
"Terrified security guards", read the report "called in police and clergymen after spotting 'ghosts' on a bypass being built near Sheffield. A sergeant and police constable sent to the scene - near Stocksbridge - later said they 'felt a presence' as they patrolled...but South Yorkshire police have refused to comment on the incident, or on reports that the Panda car was jolted by mysterious thuds..." Other than the police, the two other witnesses, security guards Steven Brookes and David Goldthorpe - who work for Constant Securities of Mexborough, were extremely disturbed about their experiences. On the morning of 8 September, they arrived at the home of a Stocksbridge clergyman, waking him at 7 a.m., apparently wanting to know if the area had once been a graveyard and whether an exorcism was possible. One of them later burst into tears and went into shock, but both agreed to return to work at the bypass.

In an attempt to ascertain the facts behind this peculiar story before it entered the realms of popular mythology (i.e. the columns of the *News of the World*), I made contact with the police officers involved and arranged to interview them and visit the scene of the alleged "happenings". I have found that obtaining first-hand transcribed accounts from witnesses, and visiting the scene of their experiences with them as soon as possible afterwards is the only honest way of conducting a worthwhile investigation into such claims.

I arrived at Deepcar police station on the evening of 1st October 1987, armed with my trusty six-celled flashlight, geiger counter and pith helmet and, after a lengthy discussion, accompanied the witnesses - PC Richard Walton and Special Constable John Bellamy' to the scene of the phenomena in a police Landrover. Although the night was cold, dark and extremely windy, the witnesses took me to the unfinished road on the lonely hillside above Stocksbridge and described once again what transpired. I was impressed by the sincerity of both witnesses - who had been subjected to considerable ridicule by friends and workmates, and I am convinced that they were telling the truth about a baffling experience.

Although the alleged "hauntings" received a fair amount of publicity in the local press, due to the police policy of refusing to make any comment on the incident it did not make the national newspapers. Shortly before I travelled to Deepcar I was invited to discuss the matter with the police superintendent responsible for the Ecclesfield division at Hammerton Road in Sheffield. He expressed concern about how publicity surrounding the events would reflect upon his force and so I was asked not to speak to the press or to use the real names of the witnesses.

The alleged "paranormal" manifestations took place on a stretch of the then uncompleted Stocksbridge bypass road, at grid reference SK 272989. The bypass, which has cost over £14 million to build, was opened in April 1988 and links the M1 motorway with the A628 Trans-Pennine Barnsley to Manchester road. At the time



Map showing Pearoyd Lane and Stocksbridge

of the incidents the road was in the final stages of construction by McAlpine and this particular stretch on the hill-side above the steelworks at Stocksbridge was patrolled each night by two security guards in a Landrover.

Pearoyd Lane is a steep-sided track which ascends from the BSC works in Stocksbridge in the valley below to the villages of Hunshelf and Green Moor which stand at 303 metres above sea level on a ridge of high land above. High-tension electricity pylons straddle the hillside along the length of the new road, running from Dunford Bridge to the sub-station at Brampton, between Barnsley and Rotherham. It was around one of these pylons that phenomena were observed.

It should be noted also that 10 miles to the north-east, a low-level UFO was reported above the same length of electricity pylons at Hoyland near Barnsley on 10 February 1988. Two witnesses here observed a huge black triangular object at very low altitude with pulsating green and red lights apparently following the course of the pylons between Harley and Wentworth in the direction of Rotherham after 10.30 p.m. Five other groups of witnesses in the same area independently reported a similar brilliantly lighted object at the same time. Extensive enquiries ruled out aircraft or

helicopters as an explanation.²

The scene of the ghostly happenings is isolated and has an eerie reputation locally. There are no houses nearby except a few scattered farms, the nearest habitations being the streets of Stocksbridge in the valley below. In September 1987, the bypass road being under construction, the area was out of bounds to the public and the new road was inaccessible to any vehicles except Landrovers and earth-movers. The possibility of a hoax is very unlikely, and no other explanations have been suggested to the investigators.

The story is best told by Police Constable Walton [RW] and Special Constable John Bellamy [JB], the two eyewitnesses, whose account is here transcribed word for word:

RW - "Tuesday 8th September. A gentleman called Steven Brookes rang Ecclesfield police station. He works for Constant Securities who sub-contract out to McAlpine. Some time on either the Monday or the Tuesday night - we're not really sure, they were driving up Pearoyd Lane to check out the section of new road there. There were two of them in the Landrover. And as they've driven up they've seen the figure of a man standing on the newly constructed bridge. What you've got to bear in mind is that there is no way

you can get onto the bridge; you can't walk on to it, drive on to it. It's made that way so that kids can't climb onto it. They've stopped the Landrover at the base of the bridge. Brookes has stepped out of the Landrover; his mate has driven round. As he's come around the top of Pearoyd Lane, behind this bloke, he's put the full beam on the headlights - they've noticed at the same time that the beam goes straight through it. Then all of a sudden it was gone.

"He rang us, and of course we were sceptical. We said 'Well, what can we do - it's not a police matter; there's nothing we can do'. We just left it with them and said we'd keep our eyes peeled. They rang their boss, Michael Lee, and he rang me to ask what I thought. He said 'They've worked for me for a number of years; they're good lads and they have seen something'. We left it at that until the following morning - the Wednesday.

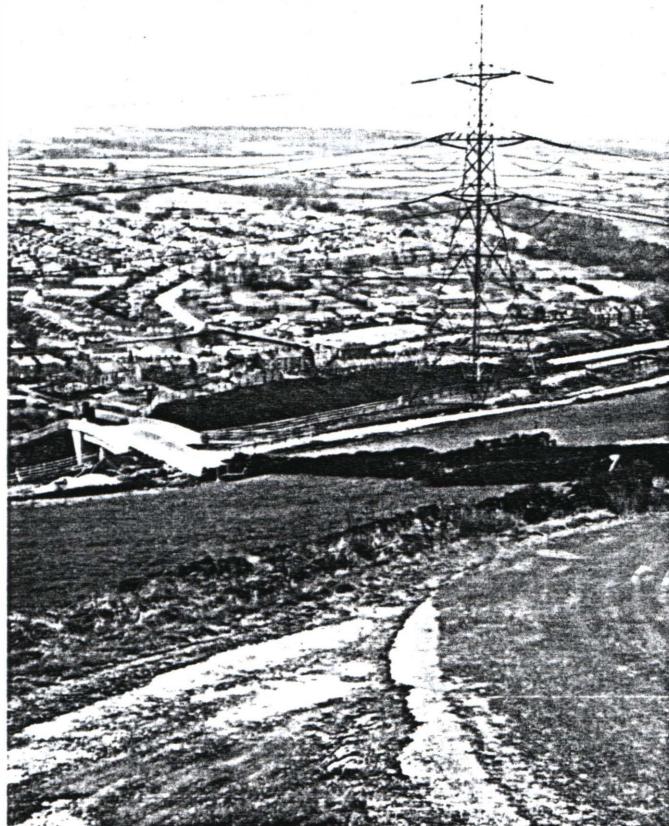
"Then Stuart Brindley, who's Stocksbridge's vicar, rang Ecclesfield to say that the men had been in touch with him, asking if he do an exorcism as they were too frightened to go back. It got back to me to sort out. When I spoke to Mr Brookes again he told me that just prior to this they had seen a group of young children playing just down from the bridge, near the new road around a pylon. They'd driven past the kids - this was at 12.30 at night - roughly the same time as before, parked the Landrover, got out, and found that there was nothing there. They'd examined round the pylon, which is fresh mud, no sign of footprints. They had followed that through by talking to some of the local workmen who were living nearby in caravans, who said that they had also heard kids' voices late at night. Now I live very close by here, and very close to the scene, and I wrote that off immediately as sheep. There's a lot of sheep up there on the bank and at night when they are asleep they make a lot of weird noises.

"The following Friday night - 11th September - I went up there with another Special Constable, [but] it was throwing it down with rain, and we didn't stop. But on the Saturday night me and John

went up, round about midnight. We'd purposely told our other colleagues that we'd gone down to Oughtibridge, so they would not think we were up there for them to set us up! We went up from the Deepcar end and drove to the bridge, and parked roughly half-way between the pylon and the bridge where the two sightings have supposedly been. We parked the car up; we turned all the lights off and all the radios off. It was a clear night, clear sky, virtual full moon; after a while we could see great. We'd got about 3/4 of a mile straight behind us, 200 yards to the bridge, 300 foot banking on the right side, 20 foot banking on the left, so if anyone came near us, we could see them.

"We'd been sat there a couple of minutes and up by the bridge I'd already noticed a large container which was like a white-painted pallet box. I'd been looking at this for quite some time and I asked John to look at it to see if anything

was amiss. We then both decided that there was something moving across and around this pallet box. We could see a shadow going across it. So I put the full beam on the car, and saw nothing at all. We let our eyes adjust, then drove up. Put the lights on, got out, not a damned thing. We went back exactly to where we were, sat and watched, and lo and behold, there was something moving again around this pallet box. Did exactly the same again, went up and looked - nothing at all. We'd been there now about 20 minutes. Went back again for the third time, to exactly the same spot and we decided that what it must have been the lights from the steelworks in Stocksbridge below that were reflecting upon the box and causing the shadows. But on the third time we stopped we both noticed within a matter of seconds that there was nothing moving by this box, which we thought odd, but we didn't think much more about it.



Pearoyd Bridge, and the pylon around which the dancing figures were seen

"We'd been sat there again for a few minutes; it was a nice night, I put my window down, I was sat in the driver's seat, John was in the passenger seat. Suddenly I had a feeling - not like I'd ever had before, because we've been working nights for a long time, just as if someone had walked over my grave, because I just froze."

JB - "You went cold, didn't you."

RW - "And what was so odd I went cold without knowing what was the matter. Then a few seconds after I had another feeling that someone was stood at the side of me, and I turned my head slowly, and I could see that there was something stood by the side of the car. But as I turned quick, there was nothing there. But as I saw there was nothing there, John let out such a scream and hit me with his arm, and I looked around, and there's somebody stood there next to the car..."

JB - "Literally next to the car."

the car. I don't know whether it was the back or the sides - it was just that something hit the car. Again there was nothing at all about; we could see around too well and were out too quick to check it. It wasn't like it said in the *Star*, the car didn't physically shake. When this happened we thought 'bugger this for a lark!' and drove back down into the works. We met Don who was with another two lads, and we went back up and sat for 5-6 minutes, not a damn thing. But what was so weird about it was the way I felt before anything had happened. I knew before anything happened that something was wrong."

JB - "Virtually it went from my side of the car to your side at the same time... As Dick was looking out of his window I was just gazing up onto the banking, and I just turned to Dick and shouted and there was this chap just stood there, next to the car. It was really weird."

[Invest.] "What was it wearing? How do you know it was a man?"

RW - "All I saw was a 'V' on his chest, I couldn't say it was a waistcoat. It was light clothing, I could see it in the moonlight..."

Neither of the two witnesses could account in any way for what they had observed, and after considerable local enquiries we were unable to find any logical explanation. There are no records of similar reports in the same area in the past, and there was certainly no graveyard or anything of that kind upon the site. However, we did ascertain that the Pearoyd Lane area has a local reputation as a weird place, and that a recluse who lives in a house on the hillside had at around the same time reported seeing a similar group of what looked like small children dancing around electricity pylons and a workman's caravan in the middle of the night.

The possibility of children from Stocksbridge or nearby villages climbing in pitch darkness onto the dangerous and unfinished road appears unlikely, and is not accepted by the witnesses. After the appearance of the report in the local press, hordes of teenagers and curiosity-seekers descended on the area from surrounding towns and held nightly vigils on the windswept hillside, but nothing further was reported.

PC Walton told us that "we've had a lot of people come forward who have seen things. They've only come forward because somebody else - as they say - has admitted it. Some people have seen something like a monk flying about. He's been seen as far and wide as Finkle Street, towards Wortley, all up and around there". PC Walton also added that "A few years ago when I was at Ecclesfield, most of the lads I used to work with there have seen strange lights over Greno Woods. A lot of people here, nightwatchmen and guards at British Tissues have seen them coming over Wharncliffe Woods. We don't even make a record in the logs [as] our people see so many weird things on the night patrol that it's not worth it". As well as the sightings of 'apparitions', another police contact informed us that in about the same week as these

RW - "I don't. We could only see part of it at eye-level through the window of the Vauxhall Astra. It definitely formed the impression of it being a person, to me a man."

JB - "To me, what I saw of him, it sort of connected to the 1820s, that sort of era. But I just looked at its face, which I presumed was a man, and it was just literally staring. Then we both looked again and it was gone."

[Investigator] - "So you saw his face as well?"

JB - "For a split second his face, yes. And to me it looked like he had got some kind of a cravat on, and a waistcoat. It looked like something out of Dickens' day. But I looked again and tried to focus and it was gone."

reports, two officers on patrol at Lodge Moor, a remote area on the western outskirts of Sheffield, had observed a group of brilliant lights moving at low level in the area of the Redmires Reservoirs. Despite making diligent enquiries we were unable to trace these witnesses and thus this story must remain anecdotal.

More interesting is the story of a motorist from Manchester investigated by Peter Hough of MUFORA; his experience took place on the night of 19th September, one week after the sightings at Pearoyd Lane. He reported seeing, whilst driving past Langsett Wood on the moors outside Stocksbridge, a cluster of powerful red and white pulsating lights which appeared to be attached to a circular object apparently hovering fifty feet from the ground amidst a plantation of fir trees. This sighting is still under investigation.

generally supposed to live underground, and to come forth on moonlit nights, to dance in circles in grassy fields. As aerial beings they could fly and move about in the air at will". MUFOB in 1976^s carried a story from the *Hull Daily Mail* which described the weird experience of one PC David Swift who saw whilst on patrol in the early hours of an August morning in East Hull "a [strange] bank of fog" on playing fields near Stonebridge Avenue. Upon investigating further "the mist revealed three dancing figures who he at first thought to be drunks playing around. As he got nearer they all disappeared into air leaving a shaken police officer behind them". One of the figures was described as "a man dressed in a sleeveless jerkin, with tight-fitting trousers, while the other two were women wearing bonnets, shawls and white dresses. All appeared to be

strange folk close behind. The face was grim with piercing eyes; quite the most unusual complexion he had ever seen. The boy just managed to scramble over the stile as his pursuer reached out to seize him."

Ufologists, like folklorists, compare texts for patterns and similarities, for instance in regards to the abduction experience, but too often conclude that because these similarities exist they must provide evidence for the objective reality of such reports. Folklorists, such as Eddie Bullard, would point out that "every UFO report claims to describe a real event, but truth and fiction, reality and belief are indistinguishable in [such] narratives". The Stocksbridge report was interpreted by the police and the press in terms of ghostlore due to the particular circumstances under which it occurred; in another context, the humanoid figure observed by the two police officers could just as easily have become a 'UFO occupant'.

The fast-growing UFO mythology is the most extensive and influential paranormal belief system at work in modern culture

dancing around a non-existent maypole as they each had an arm raised."

In his work on folklore entities 'Tales of North Wales', Ken Radford^t tells of a similar story of a ring of dancing figures which shares motifs with the sightings at Stocksbridge, which took place at Bodfari, a village beside Offa's Dyke in the old county of Denbighshire, in the late 18th century:

"One afternoon in summer some children were playing in a field nearby called Cae Caled [when] they saw several misty shapes dancing together under a tree. The dancers were no taller than the children themselves. To the sound of strange music they whirled and reeled. They had long flaxen hair and their clothes were scarlet flecked with gold. For a while the children watched in wonder. Then as the dancers moved nearer, they became afraid and ran towards the fence. The last to reach the stile was a young boy who turned to see one of the

Eddie Bullard^u writes that folklore and UFO lore share the same sort of evidence; in both cases it "is overwhelmingly anecdotal... [with] the verbal testimony of narrators describing extraordinary occurrences". The fast-growing UFO mythology is undoubtedly the most extensive and influential paranormal belief system at work in modern culture, comparable to the complex belief system of the fairy otherworld in the Celtic countries of western Europe. In the Stocksbridge case above, common folklore motifs can be identified in the eyewitness testimony, such as the ring of dancing fairies who disappear into thin air, as well as the assumption that a ghost has appeared due to the disturbance of a burial ground (even though one never existed).

In the Welsh countryside the 'Tylwyth Teg' were once regarded as a race of spirits who "forming a ring, would dance and sing out on the mountainsides", but disappear into thin air when approached. According to W Y Evans-Wentz^s "they were

As to the objective reality of the experiences detailed above, perhaps the most interesting and significant statement made by PC Walton relates to the scene of the events at Pearoyd Lane: "We were sat directly below a big radio mast where we were; there's all kinds of energy around there. If I'd been there alone I would have put it down to me scaring myself, but the two things that concerned me was the feeling I had, and the fact that John and I saw it at the same time. How on earth it got from one side of the car to the other in a split second I don't know."

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ Both these names are pseudonyms on request of the witnesses, ² See *UFO Brigantia*, March/April 1988, p 27; May/June 1988, p 10, ³ 'Shout' is a term used to describe making radio contact with neighbouring police patrols, ⁴ BULLARD, Eddie; 'Folklore Scholarship and UFO Reality', *International UFO Reporter*, Vol. 13/4, July/August 1988, pp 9-13, ⁵ EVANS-WENTZ, W Y; *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries*, Colin Smythe, 1977, ⁶ MUFOB, New Series No. 5, Autumn 1977, p 11, ⁷ RADFORD, KEN; *Tales of North Wales*, Skilton & Shaw, 1982, p 56.

REASON V SUPERSTITION

A RESPONSE BY STEWART CAMPBELL

Whatever Ralph Noyes is skilled at it is not using dictionaries! Although he looked at several dictionaries he quotes only the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* and then not the latest edition. If he had looked at the 1978 *Concise* he would have found an additional and important definition, viz. 'widely held but unjustified idea of the effects or nature of a thing'. If he had looked at *Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary* he would have found, *inter alia*, the same idea: 'a deep-rooted but unfounded general belief'. This seems to be the sense in which we are using the word 'superstition' in this journal. Nevertheless, Noyes abandons the dictionaries and invents his own definition, 'persistence in a belief in the face of contrary evidence'.

The difference between Noyes's definition and that of the dictionaries is profound. In the first place the dictionaries claim that the belief has to be widespread. Noyes allows a single person to hold a superstitious belief! The ancients who held that the world was flat were superstitious but if a modern person holds that belief he is merely being perverse. Astrology always was (and is) superstitious. In short, Noyes's definition takes no account of the extent to which a belief is held. The conviction by a persistent smoker that he is not damaging his (or others) health is not a superstition; it is just a refusal to face facts. On the other hand, the widespread belief that a monster lives in Loch Ness is a

superstition. But in the latter case where is the 'contrary evidence'? There is just no evidence for Nessie and Noyes' definition has nothing to work on.

Then Noyes's definition requires there to be 'evidence', and moreover that it should be seen to be 'contrary'. The problem here is that one person's contradiction is another's confirmation! Evidence is in the eye of the beholder! Nessie buffs see the results from various explorations at Loch Ness as evidence for the existence of nessie. Sceptics like me claim that whatever they have got is not evidence for Nessie. They have misinterpreted the data as evidence. Consequently Noyes's definition will stumble over this question of evidence.

The problem of defining 'superstition' is the inverse of the problem of defining 'science', a matter that has troubled philosophers of science for a long time. It is now fairly generally agreed that science consists of a set of beliefs, not a set of facts. Facts are just not available, or in other words, 'truth' is unknown. What science does is to adopt beliefs about truth knowing that the beliefs are not absolutely correct. A scientist's problem then is to determine which of various beliefs is closer to the truth. In some cases he has to accept that he will never know the truth and must operate with an approximation, or a model with which he can work. Newton's laws of gravity are a simple model of gravity,

on the basis that it is a force. Einstein's model of gravity has no forces, instead it is a field effect. Modern ideas suggest that gravity acts via particles called gravitons. Scientists do not ask themselves which of these is correct; they ask which will take us furthest in our exploration of the universe.

For the above reasons I define science as 'a set of beliefs justified by reason and experience'. They may be justified today but not tomorrow. There must be a good reason for the belief and the experience of scientists must agree with the belief. Conversely I define superstition as 'a belief not justified by reason or experience'. The symmetry of these two definitions is very satisfactory and helps to determine whether or not a particular belief is or is not a superstition.

CSICOP is certainly correct in claiming that belief in psychokinesis is a superstition; it is unreasonable and there is no accepted evidence for it. Noyes's claim that there is 'overwhelming' evidence is preposterous and the *Journal of Scientific Exploration* is hardly a reputable journal (its editors are people who all accept the existence of one or more anomalous phenomena). Similarly, belief in UFOs is a space-age superstition; it is both unreasonable and at odds with the experience of the scientific community. Where is the 'contrary evidence' that a UFO buff is refusing to face in his persistence? He would point to mountains of what he regards as confirmatory 'evidence' on which his belief is based. Noyes's mistake is to regard evidence as unequivocal and science as a set of known laws ('the laws of nature').

Every observation is open to more than one interpretation and here are no laws other than those we invent from time to time. Because we shall never truly understand the operation of the universe it is all the more important that we can distinguish between justified and unjustified beliefs, between science and superstition. One will take us forward, the other backwards. It is of concern that Noyes does not know whether he is coming or going.



LETTERS

MARKET RESEARCH

Dear John Rimmer

I can only respond to your 'free market ufology' editorial (*Magonia* 31) as editor of the *MUFON UFO Journal*, where I share some, but not all, responsibility for its contents. As sometimes happens, events render some articles mostly or merely moot almost as they see the light of day. I'm not presumptuous enough to say which is the case, indeed if either, in terms of free market ufology, but I would like to make a few comments at any rate.

Firstly, the December issue of the *Journal* carries a lengthy criticism of *Gulf Breeze* by former *Journal* editor Richard Hall and Dr Willy Smith. Secondly, it should be pointed out that as regard 'official' adoption or organisational stances, the differences between those of CUFOS and MUFON on *Gulf Breeze* seem likely to loom as large (and perhaps as virulent) as those you relate between YUFOS and IUN in the UK over two controversial cases. Thirdly, *Gulf Breeze* has not quite managed to put MJ-12 completely in the shade: the January number of *MUFON UFO Journal* has an article on the latter by William Moore.

Fourthly, there is the matter of the free market itself. While true that MUFON far outstrips CUFOS in terms of field investigators, say, the subscription lists of the two are about equal, as I understand. If MUFON is more successful in

other areas what can be said about markets and free enterprise but the obvious? Not all monopolies are the result of paranoidly conceived conspiracies; some are the result of success, i.e., Thatcher-Reagan-vaunted market and economic forces. As editor of the *Journal* I try to have my own ufological axes ground by independent third parties and publish the results accordingly. This frequently means I am damned by both side of any issue, but so be it.

The recent submersion of APRO, as another example, can hardly be attributed to actions on the behalf of MUFON, CUFOS, or FUFOR, or any of a number of lesser organisations. Ditto the earlier demise of NICAP from within. As for political infighting and control struggles based on personalities, not to mention normal differences of opinion and approach, hat is surely as Mullah Nasruddin once observed, another matter entirely. Any suggestions?

Sincerely
Dennis Stacy, Editor, *MUFON UFO Journal*.

DEKLASSIFIED

Dear John Rimmer,

I would like to comment on the review by Hilary Evans of *UFO Abductions: a dangerous game* in the November 1988 issue of *Magonia*.

Evans does the ufological community a service when he points out that Philip J. Klass offers some worthwhile and trenchant criticisms of the *UFO*

phenomenon. Too many people reject Klass with a knee-jerk response, even without reading what he has to say. On the other hand, to "endorse every word he writes" and overlook the many things he leaves unsaid means that Evans's review oversimplifies the abduction problem.

Klass rightly cautions that hypnosis is a tool fraught with uncertainties. All experts agree that subjects become more suggestible, and abduction by confabulation is a serious risk in the usual American way of investigating such claims. What Klass ignores is the fact that one-fourth or more of all cases come to light without use of hypnosis. Many abductees who undergo hypnosis recall significant portions of their alleged experiences without hypnotic assistance. Although Bud Hopkins has no formal training in the technique, professionals with an awareness of the dangers of confabulation carried out the hypnosis in most of the cases he has discussed. Not everyone who comes to Hopkins bearing the symptoms of an abduction proves to be an abductee, even with the help of hypnosis. These facts call into question and direct cause-and-effect relationship between hypnosis and abduction reports.

More challenging still is the fact that abductions are pretty much alike in form and content, with or without hypnosis. the reliable cases on record are characterised by a consistent sequence of episodes and recurrence of details, some of them quite obscure. A curious adherence to pattern distinguishes these reports. They show little of the creative variation of folk narratives or the personal content of fantasies. A psychological or sociological explanation for abductions must account for these similarities to be satisfactory, but in Klass's argument they simply do not exist.

Klass suggests that personality differences in investigators influence the stories told by abductees. His evidence is the way that Leo Sprinkle finds kindly aliens while Hopkins finds only unpleasant ones, but in this case his humour is more on target than his facts. After all, Sprinkle investigated the Casey County

abduction, which contains perhaps the worst litany of torture and terror in the literature, and Hopkins the tender reunion of Kathie Davis with her lost child.

Both Klass and Evans cite the importance of Alvin Lawson's experiments with hypnotised non-abductees. In fact these experiments demonstrate once again the pitfalls of selective emphasis. Willy Smith pointed out in the pages of *Magonia* 6, 1981, that the types of beings reported in these experiments varied greatly, and such a menagerie corresponded more closely to a chance distribution than to the reports of actual abductees. Anyone prompted to imagine a UFO abduction should be able to describe a few comparable details at some level of generalisation as the experimental subjects do. These successes look impressive in isolation, but the overall comparison between real and imaginary abduction narratives is not very persuasive.

In sum, Klass pinpoints many of the potential weaknesses in the abduction evidence. When examined with some care, the evidence shows that those potentials go unrealised. Hypnosis seems less culpable than he suggests, and major abduction investigators more circumspect than he allows. Even though Klass's attack fails, its cause is not necessarily lost. Abductions may well be subjective experiences of some sort. Jenny Randles bedevils the objective hypothesis more successfully than Klass ever does when she finds that the beings in British abductions are often tall humans, not short gray humanoids. The preference of one type for Britain and another for America is difficult to square with physically real abductions. Evans raises an equally formidable challenge by showing the affinities of abduction accounts with a vast array of supernatural being lore. The objective reality of abductions is by no means assured, but neither is their subjectivity a foregone conclusion. This phenomenon deserves better than a vague gesture in the direction of psychology, followed by a premature call of 'game over'.

Thomas E Bullard
Bloomington, Indiana

BOUNDARY DEFICIT DEFICIENCIES

Dear John,

I've just received *MAGONIA* 32 and I fear that I just can't agree with the articles I find in it, especially those by Kottmeyer and Russo/Grassino. They give me the impression of armchair pontificating-at-a-distance about cases they've never investigated. Granted that Strieber is a real weirdo, no other abductee is known to me to fit Kottmeyer's boundary-deficit scenario. At least one, I am certain, does not - myself. I do not have nightmares or hypnopompic hallucinations, do not lose track of the boundaries between sleep and wakefulness, or any of the other things he asserts are common to us all. Much more seriously though, the hypothesis just cannot account for the abduction phenomenon as we know it over here. There are cases where abductees are missed immediately, and are extensively searched for, by police or the military, etc., but not located. Then they may suddenly reappear perhaps in a spot where the searchers have just failed to find them, or perhaps miles away with no visible means of transport, and perhaps with a fresh, deep cut on the back of the leg. These have been going on for a long time, involving very small children, servicemen, etc. Where were they? If they were just standing somewhere in a trance, hallucination, why weren't they found? The wounds are fresh and still bleeding - it's not just a question of someone forgetting the origins of an old scar! How would Kottmeyer address these cases?

Russo and Grassino seem to think that Americans have somehow been so daft as to 'resort' to abductions, crashes, etc. Quite the contrary; these are the reports the witnesses themselves are bringing to us. What would they have us do with them? Ignore them? What do they mean, no evidence? The reality of a government cover-up is quite thoroughly documented, and I do not see how it can be denied. There are not only the inexplicable (in spite of Klass) ground traces, but traces on the bodies and clothing of abductees that defy analysis, and, very dramatically, the implants themselves, which are

transparent to X-rays but have been detected by sophisticated NMRI scans. Uniformly they are in places where it would be extremely dangerous to access them surgically - adjacent to the optic nerve, for instance - so as yet none have been retrieved. Should this ever happen we should have a much better idea of what is going on. And though I mentioned it in my review of Jenny Randles *Abduction*, let me repeat that real abductees are simply not responsive to leading questions under hypnosis. I'd like to know how these three authors would respond to these points.

Sincerely
Daryl Collins'

Over to you, Kottmeyer, Russo and Grassino.

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT WAS SAFE TO FORGET ABOUT MIRAGES AGAIN

Dear Sir

You indicate that the discussion of mirages is closed, but before I have had an opportunity to defend myself against the attack by Robert Scheaffer. Surely I am entitled to the right of reply?*

The received wisdom, which Scheaffer repeats, is that stars and planets cannot be seen in daylight (except at twilight or when the sun is near the horizon). But I propose that a mirage makes them visible! Scheaffer ignores this and seems to know nothing about mirages. His notion that the surface brightness of a mirage of a star must be less than that of the star ignores any focussing, to say nothing of Raman brightening.

Ex-President Jimmy Carter did not recall the exact date of his 'UFO' sighting (contrary to Scheaffer's claim) but Scheaffer later established that it was 6th January 1969. I have taken Leary to be at 31°N 84°.5W and the time of the incident 0015 UT (7 Jan at Greenwich). Using these data calculations show that Altair (αAql) was at an altitude of 6° on an azimuth of 277°. Although Carter stated that the object he saw was 30° above the horizon his sketch showed is about 10°. Observers often exaggerate altitude by a factor of two or three. While Venus was at an altitude of

25° it was in the SW; Carter's UFO was in 'the west'. He reported the object to be as big as the moon, with variations in size. Not only that but it changed in brightness and colour, being 'bluish at first, then reddish'. These changes in brightness probably accounted for his impression that it repeatedly came towards him, once only 300 metres away. Finally it disappeared into the distance. This behaviour is not consistent with the behaviour of Venus at 25° altitude. However it is consistent with a mirage of a star at low altitude, particularly a blue star like Alatair.

I have not 'failed to notice' anything in respect of Betty Hill's UFO report and I do not deny that at some point she may have mistaken Jupiter for a UFO. However Jupiter could not have been the object which later frightened them and hovered in front of their car. I suggest that it was Anatreis, but without precise time, location and azimuth I cannot be sure.

Gill's 'UFO' 'came down' towards him, giving off a predominantly blue light at about the time Sirius (a blue star) set in the WSW. Venus was at an altitude of 37° is the WNW. Because Gill's description is consistant with a mirage I conclude that the source must ahve been Sirius.

The case for Capt. Mantell's UFO being a Skyhook balloon has *not* been 'well enough established'; no one has been able to find any record of the release of such a balloon on the day in question and the fact that the object remained relatively stationary is inconsistent with the balloon hypothesis. For this latter reason the USAF concluded that the object was Venus, but Venus was in the wrong direction. Mantell was heading in the direction of Jupiter (220°).

Scheaffer's dismissal of my explanation for the New Zealand 'UFO' filmed in December 1978 shows his ignorance of the Novaya Zemlya effect, which I mentioned in my article. Venus was only 8° below the observer's horizon.

It is not true that mirages are never seen more than half

a degree above the horizon. With a horizontal thermoclyne the angle can hardly exceed 1° , but with a curved thermoclyne the angle can be much greater.

Anyone who thinks Minnaert's book 'authoritative' is easily impressed and ignorant of the complexity which mirages can display. Minnaert's treatment is superficial. Scheaffer calls me irresponsible, ignorant, careless and a 'would-be skeptic!' He also thinks that I will bring discredit to the 'honourable [sic] (S. Campbell's [sic], Ed.) name of skepticism'. Well, it's too late! I'm already a sceptic and scepticism has already been discredited (by Scheaffer, Klass and Oberg, who jump to the first available sceptical explanation and refuse to revise their opinions).

I note (with amusement) Ralph Noyes's recent discovery of the literature on ball lightning. There are indeed parallels with UFO reports, with the exception that science accepts ball lightning but rejects UFOs! At least I am consistent in pointing out that all we possess of either are *reports*. Noyes might have mentioned my rebuttal (of Stenhoff's vicious [sic] (my [sic], Ed.) personal attack) in *New Scientist* of 10 March 1988.

Since I was born in Birmingham
it can be argued that I am not
a Scot!

Yours faithfully
Steuart Campbell, Edinburgh.

There is no such thing in British Common or Statute Law as a 'Right of Reply'. Indeed, just such a provision was rejected by Parliament a few weeks ago. However your Editor is prepared to allow the privilege of reply to aggrieved correspondents provided their letters are interesting. This correspondence is now definitely closed.

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Northern Echoes

loss of autonomy experienced by the schizophrenic). Blood sucking aliens not only has a cultural echo of blood sucking capitalists, but also Jewish ritual slaughter rumours. There are echoes of older witchcraft fears, and of the fears that 'our leaders' are secretly controlled by inimical foreign forces. So instead of wise leader, there are the faceless grey bureaucrats who govern the peoples' lives according to the dictates of 'doing my job'. They are apt symbols of Clark's over-intellectual society. the greys really do value equations over people.

Going full circle we can see that Lear's charge against the US Government is identical to the Islamic fundamentalist's charge against Rushdie: one of us, who should be our inspirer and protector, has gone over to the demonic other side in exchange for worldly power. If we generalise the themes of betrayal by the protectors, which lies at the heart of the Witch Hunt, we can add in the rumours, fears and accusations made by both sides in the Cleveland dispute.

The symbol of the grey meanies is one of constant repetition of dehumanised over rationalisation: large head, nonexistent generative and digestive organs, comparisons to reptiles and insects, inability to nurture, lack of compassion, treatment of people as things, lack of individuality and hive-like existence. These are all symbols of the mechanised mass-world, machines on feet, the spirits of modernity made flesh.

BACK ISSUES

The following back issues of *Magonia* are available, price £1.00 each, post paid:

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MEURGER, Michel (with Claude Gagnon). *Lake Monster Traditions; a cross-cultural analysis*. Fortean Tomes, 1989, £12.95.

Pierre Bedard lives on the shores of Lake St Francois, in Quebec. He believes there are two monsters in the lake - one which has a scaly back and six or seven fins and one with a smooth black back, at least 20 feet long. His father, Philippe Bedard, saw the smooth back once and described it as a 'dead tree' that 'transformed into a fish'.

Another witness, Louis-Philippe Roy, thinks the St Françoise monster is a giant sturgeon. Henri-Louis Gaulin describes it as 'like a submarine', but Toussaint Dostie disagrees: 'It's a little like a crocodile,' he says.

Michel Meurger prints a table showing the variety of forms reported from Lac St Francois. At least four sorts of monster seem to be involved - the 'big fish', the 'horse-head', the 'living log' and a boat-like creature. Lake St Francois is 21 miles long; Lake Mephremagog, to the south, is 32 miles long and seems to be inhabited by five different monsters. Meurger notes: 'Given the appetite attributed to this animal... different species of predator as large as these could co-exist in one lake.'

A cryptozoologist might suggest that witnesses were describing the same phenomenon in different words. This is precisely Meurger's point. His book is about the way that received notions, the cultural background of the witness, and

the limitations of his vocabulary combine to colour perception. As such, *Lake Monster Traditions* is of vital interest not only to cryptozoologists but also to readers of *Magonia* and indeed to every student of Fortean phenomena.

The author is dealing with a complex and unquantifiable subject, and as such his book is not an easy read. The first and longest chapter - which follows an introduction perhaps unfortunately subtitled 'The origins of facticity' - reports the result of field trips to Quebecois and American lakes. Meurger and his colleague Claud Gagnon uncover a diversity of accounts that must surely discomfort hardline cryptozoologists - can anyone believe that real monsters, even in the relatively acceptable form of giant fish, exist in more than twenty Quebec lakes?

Later chapters go a long way towards explaining this phenomenon. Meurger examines lake monster traditions in Europe, mixes in a little folklore, and suggests that contact with the American Indians' own rich mythology of serpent and sacred lake helped to generate the sort of 'mythic landscape' in which modern-day lake monster reports could flourish.

By examining tales of bottomless lakes and secret connecting channels, Meurger is able to put monster reports in their cultural context. 'Cryptozoologists will always fail' he writes, 'because they try to explain a general myth in local terms. All they can catch are stunning waves and huge sturgeons, which solve only why the legends have fixed on a particular lake, but not the particular form of the legend... monsters and the mythical landscape are transformed into speculations. Each helps the other: the monster, being the most discussed, reinforces the mythical landscape and plays the role of an harbinger of probability; the mythical landscape, in turn, helps the belief in the monster to withstand the disillusionments of the search.'

Lake Monster Traditions is the first truly 'three-dimensional' lake monster book. It puts flesh on the bare bones of Campbell's mirage hypothesis

and Binn's poorly reported otter and deer and is a much richer, more rewarding work than those of either of the earlier sceptics. Meurger is more inclined to celebrate human imagination than he is to tut-tut at human credulity, and his richly illustrated book ranks among the very best ever written on anomalous phenomena.

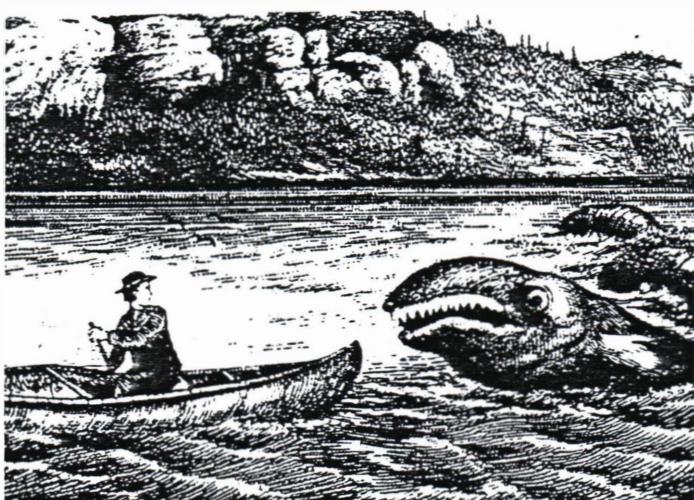
Mike Dash

NEELEY Jnr., Robert G., *The Airship Chronicle, and UFOs of 1896-1897: The Airship Wave*, Fund For UFO Research, Mount Rainier, U.S.A., 1988, \$40.00 and \$50.00.

These two reports, which are 263 and 324 pages long respectively, supply the very best study of the American 1896-97 phantom airship scare. A great deal of speculation has surrounded this scare and has helped bolster all types of theories about UFOs in general. Unfortunately, few writers have bothered to conduct original research into the matter.

Thomas Bullard's *The Airship File* provided researchers with a vast amount of transcriptions from the newspapers of the period, now Neeley's studies try to make sense of this raw material. The *Chronicle* is a chronologically arranged catalogue of the main bulk of the reports and the entries are very similar in format to that of Peter Rogerson's INTCAT study.

Granville Oldroyd, David Clarke, and myself have put the British 1912-13 phantom airship scare newspaper reports into the chronological sequence of the sightings (this study is also available from the Fund For UFO Research). As I prepared this I became worried about such an approach. A chronological survey is alright if there is something objectively "out there" but it would be very interesting to produce a content analysis of the press during such scares to show the number and length of newspaper items. The reported sightings always seem to hit a few maximum peaks and then slowly wind down. I suspect that newspaper reports hit even higher peaks in terms of number and length of items and then rapidly disappear from the front page to the inside pages. Such a study would be



able to consider the role of the newspaper medium in the generation and perpetuation of such scares.

The second part of Neeley's study is a more considered look at the scare. This includes long discussions about CE 3 hoaxes, the stories of inventors, and a look at the physical evidence, plus a review of Fortean stories in the newspapers of the period, listings of cases that could be explained in terms of mundane phenomena, insufficient data, etc.

This is an excellent model for UFO researchers, especially since 4,935 newspapers were reviewed to compile these two reports! In terms of time, money and effort Neeley put into this work the price for these reports is incredibly cheap. The only fault I have with this work is that many of the pages are badly copied and some are downright unreadable!

Given that this is such a huge body of work it will be some time before Neeley's work can be fully utilised and digested, but I am sure it will explode the glib theories and silly stories which have been spread about this scare. Certainly it offers a body of material that shows the intricacy and immensity of a wave that makes modern-day UFO waves seem like storms in a teacup.

Nigel Watson

RANDLES, Jenny, and HOUGH, Peter. *Death by Supernatural Causes?* Grafton, 1988. £2.99.

Are the boggarts and grey meanies really out to get us? Can the friendly baby-sitter set the baby on fire with a glance? Do psychics have insight into hidden evil lurking under the prim exterior of the English countryside? Randles and Hough try to answer these questions with some restraint. Topics covered include the disappearance of Frederick Valentich, the Ken Edwards encounter, the Halton College spontaneous human combustion, the Zygmund Adamski story (again?), cattle mutilations and the disappearance of Genette Tate.

Some of these are indeed genuine, established mysteries but others, such as Ken Edwards' death being related

to seeing an entity years before, seem to be taking the coincidence game too far. As the authors point out, and I can confirm, the *Warrington Guardian* for the day of the encounter featured part two of a three part series on UFOs. Could that have helped transform a patch of mist from the Moss into a giant alien?

The Zygmund Adamski story would be less of a mystery if 'investigators' could get it into their heads that there is a tradition in mining areas, sanctioned by the community, but strictly speaking illegal, for out-of-work, striking, or otherwise down on their luck miners to scrape a living foraging coal from tips. There are rumours that the police know exactly what happened to Genette Tate, whose disappearance no sane person has ever attributed to supernatural causes, but are prevented by lack of evidence from commenting publicly. The chapter on cattle mutilations seems out of place and a bit of a make-weight, and too much attention is paid to those who advocate ufological rather than natural causes such as scavengers leading to social panic.

If this had been a book about historical mysteries of the Victorian period I would not have had the rather queasy feeling I did about making entertainment - however well intentioned - out of such recent tragedies as that of Jacqueline Fitzsimmons. PR

PERMUTT, Cyril. *Photographing The Spirit World: images from beyond the spectrum.* The Aquarian Press, 1988, £6.99.

Flicking through this book you cannot help being fascinated by the images of what are alleged to be supernormal photographs. Part of this fascination is created by wondering how on earth anyone could be fooled into thinking that these images show anything other than simple double exposures, hoaxes or just ignorance of processing errors or human gullibility.

A good example of one of the supernormal pictures that can be easily explained is shown on page 105. This shows an image of the American train robber, Bob Brown. The supernormal photograph shows a

portrait of him with his eyes closed, yet the only published photograph of him shows him with his eyes open. This would make a very good case except that the spirit photograph has exactly the same pose, lighting and shadow features, the only difference is that it is blurred and the contrast between light and dark exaggerated (thus causing the eyes to appear to be closed, or to be more precise not visible for inspection).

Most photographs of deceased relatives look too much like old photographs of them, and they always tend to fit convenient spaces in the negative where they won't overlap with the 'real' image. Thoughtographic images don't seem any more convincing. The exploits of Uri Geller or Ted Serios (who used an intriguing 'gismo' to produce polaroid

thoughtographs) hardly inspire confidence. Permutt does a good job of reviewing the development of photography and the almost parallel development of supernormal photography. Unfortunately, he does not take a very critical attitude towards the images he reproduces and he could have mentioned the saga of the Cottingley fairy photographs and similar episodes that highlight the complexities of evaluating such photographs. With the fascination with alien entities no doubt the images from beyond the spectrum will change entirely from shrouded figures, ectoplasmic emanations, and ghostly blurred images of dead relatives, into spacemen covered in tin foil suits or saintly space-brothers smiling down from some extraterrestrial heaven.

Nigel Watson

TEFFERT, Darold A. *Extraordinary People; an exploration of the savant syndrome.* Bantam Press, 1989. £12.95.

One of the perpetual problems encountered in the frontier areas of psychical research, is that of 'how could they have done it?'. How could, for instance, a medium mimic perfectly a deceased person; how can a past-life regressed remember odd passages from a book just glanced at years ago; how can a psychic utilise subtle facial clues to guess at the thoughts of another?

This book is an exploration of one facet of the hidden reaches of the human personality, the savant phenomenon, which as the old name - idiot-savant - suggests, is concerned with islands of ability in an ocean of sub-normal functioning. This may be a normal talent, the talented savant, or it may be of outstanding, incomprehensible brilliance soaring up like a mountain above the wasteland.

There is the musical mimicry of Leslie Lemke, born autistic, blind, palsied and brain damaged, who can perfectly reproduce a tune heard only once. There is Ellen, blind, hyperactive, who also has phenomenal musical ability, linked to an extraordinary clock sense, which gives her the ability to tell the time accurately without a clock. There is Alonso who sculpts brilliantly from memory; the calendrical calculating ability of twins Charles and George, or the outstanding architectural drawings of Stephen Wiltshire.

Teffert not only discusses these individual cases, but summarises the development of studies of the savant since the 18th century. He suggests many of the savants had early infantile autism, a condition characterised by obsessive behaviour and extreme withdrawal, and suggests that their talent is linked to the extreme concentration possible for those who are not distracted by outside stimuli. In other cases damage to one cerebral hemisphere may lead to compensatory increased development of the other, leading to an increase in holistic, non-linguistic abilities, in contrast to an atrophy of the linguistic.

A possibility he fails to consider is whether some of these people have not been socially inhibited from expressing abilities because they have not learned that they are not supposed to be able to do them.

Peter Rogerson

POLLACK, Rachel. *The New Tarot; modern variations of ancient images.* Aquarian, 1989. £12.95

One of the greatest expressions of archetypal imagery must be the cards of the tarot deck. Devised in the 14th century as easily recognisable symbols for a series of card games, the fantastical images of these cards have, over the past two hundred years acquired a complex symbolic overlay. The original images, which may have originated from contemporary mnemonic systems such as those described by Frances Yates, have been developed and exploited by a long line of mystics and occultists to the extent that many of them now have little if anything in common with the historic designs.

Rachel Pollack looks at over 70 modern tarot decks, analysing them from historical, artistic and 'functional' viewpoints. She divides them into a number of groups, examining those which have been constructed as a form of artistic expression, such as Salvador Dali's famous 'Universal' tarot, as well as those which are intended as an expression of occult, esoteric and philosophical systems. There is a section on tarots which illustrate the myths and legends of various cultures, from Norse and Celtic, to Native American and Maya.

Of particular interest is her selection of women's tarots. This is an increasingly important facet of the development of the modern esoteric cards. The idea of the tarot and its imagery has proved particularly appealing to many feminists, including a number of otherwise sceptical women parapsychologists. It is not immediately apparent why this should be so other than a general cultural identity with 'wise women' and 'fortune telling', although I suspect that also the generally positive images of women portrayed in the decks may be a factor: 'strength' for instance is traditionally depicted as a female figure as are the cardinal virtues shown on the cards.

Rachel Pollack's detailed commentary on the decks she analyses is pertinent, and she does not hesitate to criticise the poor standard of artwork that mars some otherwise well thought-out designs. Nor does she allow a sympathetic understanding of the esoteric aspects of the tarot to obscure the more mundane (if no less intriguing) historical and cultural background.

The book is lavishly illustrated in colour and black and white and will be of value not only to practitioners of the esoteric tarot, but to collectors and card historians.

John Rimmer



16

THE TOWER



17

THE STAR



KING OF DISKS



QUEEN OF CUPS

ROTHMAN, Milton A. *A Physicist's Guide to Skepticism* Prometheus Books, Buffalo, NY, 1988.

As a physicist, Rothman is somewhat agitated by people whose beliefs contradict ascertainable facts, and he uses his knowledge of physics to show how science proceeds by constructing models of reality and testing them against observations and experiments.

Most of the book consists of lucid descriptions of some of the basic principles of physics. There is also an excellent appendix entitled 'Why things can't go faster than light' which summarises the special theory of relativity. However, he ignores or discounts certain interpretations of quantum theory, which admit the possibility of getting around the limitations imposed by the velocity of light, but in such a way as to avoid the obvious paradoxes.

Rothman claims that his book is "philosophy of science as understood by an experimental physicist, written for the nonspecialist". Well, the science is fine but the same cannot be said of the philosophy. Problems which philosophers have agonised over for centuries cause him no bother at all. For instance: "The proper skeptic is a pragmatist, a person whose knowledge is based on experience and observation, who knows the difference between belief and knowledge and remembers where beliefs come from and how knowledge enters the mind." Now the difference between belief and knowledge may be obvious to him and to his fellow skeptics (and sceptics, too, no doubt) but it is far from obvious to philosophers, who devote a whole branch of their subject - epistemology - to arguing about it.

Another important branch of philosophy - ethics - also causes him no sleepless nights. He has no time at all for those who have moral qualms about the practical applications of certain recent advances in biology, such as easier abortions, and genetic engineering on humans or animals.

Rothman apparently has no concept of the interdependence of science, philosophy and

theology as these disciplines have developed since the Renaissance; he sees science and religion as being locked in a conflict which must end with the total triumph of science, when everybody will be sceptical.

There will be a 'legal and political backlash', though. Will there be future Giordano Brunos and Galileo Galileis? Will there be lynchings and burnings? The answer depends on the degree of hysteria generated? How's that for hysteria (not to mention paranoia)?

This could have been a very interesting and worthwhile book if only the author knew as much about philosophy and religion as he knows about physics.

John Harney

NOONE, John. *The Man Behind the Iron Mask.* Alan Sutton, 1988. £12.95.

Not, perhaps, a strictly Fortean or paranormal topic, but a fascinating historical mystery. The story of the 'man in the iron mask' is here examined critically. Interpretations are placed in historical order, so that fashions in solutions are highlighted. The author rejects romantic suggestions that the MITIM was a twin of Louis XIV, the Duke of Monmouth. Also rejected is the standard identification of 'Eustache Dauger, valet' as the MITIM was recorded, with the rascally Eustache Dauger de Cavoye, who is shown to have had quite a separate fate. Instead Noone plumps for 'Rimmer's Axiom': 'Of all possible solutions to a mystery the most boring is the most likely.' The Man in the Iron Mask was a valet, a nobody whose status was systematically enhanced by his goatherd, Saint-Mars, who had run out of genuinely high class and status-enhancing prisoners such as Fouquet. PR

HAWKINS, Stephen W. *A Brief History of Time; from the big bang to black holes.* Bantam Press, 1988. £14.95.

This short book provides an introduction to modern cosmology. The SF touches that one finds in Gribbin and Davies at times are missing, but the

account is of sufficient boggle-factor. Hawkins theme is that from the transcendental perspective of mathematical imaginary time the universe has no beginning and no end; time, like space, being a hypersphere. With ideas like this well in the mainstream of scientific thought, one wonders what the attractions are of the far less exciting pseudosciences. Peter Rogerson

WEBSTER, Ken. *The Vertical Plane*. Grafton Books, 1989. £3.99.

After electronic voice phenomena and telephone calls from the dead, it had to come: the possessed computer which prints out riddling documents from nowhere. Though the prize for first in this field appears to go to Dr Paul Bennewitz, whose computer told him about alien bases in New Mexico, school teacher Ken Webster has come up with the most fantastic story since the Green Stone/Red Fire farrago.

The basic plot goes thus: Ken and his girlfriend Debbie find that their centuries-old cottage in Doddlestone near Chester has a poltergeist, and soon afterwards mysterious messages start appearing on their home computer. From these one appears to be able to construct a story in which time travellers from 2109 (who may also be the inhabitants of a parallel tachyonic universe) have gone back to the mid-16th century and presented a mysterious "box of lights" to one Thomas Harwarden, who, using the name of a boyhood hero, Lukas Warriman, proceeds to communicate with Ken and Debbie and their friend Peter Trinder, using an antique form of English.

This leads poor Thomas/Lukas into no end of bother. He falls madly in love with the delectable Debbie and attempts to seduce her in her dreams/timeslips - "come up and see my candles" - of course this can come to nothing, and Thomas is soon arrested by the wicked local sheriff, condemned to death but spared at the last moment as he alone can operate the 'leems' (nice Olde Englyshe worde for lights). However his beautiful 14-year-old wife is burnt as a witch at Chester.

• doctor John Dee: his word processor



"Is John Dee going to contribute articles to *Magonia* via the Editor's word-processor?"

According to Webster the SPR sent down investigators who appear to have watched rather too many *Ghostbusters* type films. They try to get 2109 AD (adds up to three, 3 men in black) to answer Fermat's last theorem. No luck, not even the date when the Iron Lady finally bites the dust, only pretentious warnings like APEN with toothache. The computer prefers to communicate with a ufologist from Rhyl, Garry Rowe (Garry? Couldn't be her Garry, could it?) who also has a fine sense of the melodramatic. The book ends with the opener for the inevitable sequel, the quest for Thomas's little black book at Oxford.

Is this book going to set a trend? Is John Dee going to contribute articles to *Magonia* via the editor's word processor? Before anyone gets too excited they should recall that extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence and this book provides no evidence at all. The messages are full of anachronisms such as the use of *anno domini* dating - in Henry VIII's time dating was by regnal years -

and the painfully constructed, artily archaic English, yet with consistent punctuation. Of course, these objections pale into insignificance against the cardboard character of Thomas, who thinks like an 18th century Unitarian rather than the 16th century Roman Catholic he claims to be (but also says he lives by God's Book, a strict Protestant idea).

The messages are, of course, a hoax. Whether the entire book is largely fiction, or whether the main participants have put messages on the computer either consciously or unconsciously, or themselves are victims of a hoax by teenage hackers or impish boggarts, is not clear. The messages do have a certain family similarity to other riddling messages from Nowhere, such as UMMO, APEN, the Scoriton tapes, etc, or the products of much automatic writing. This gives a slight edge to the unconscious trickery theory, involving unconscious secondary child-like personalities.

(Reviewer's Note: My mystic friend E.L.W. tells me that

the above cynical view is typical of the negative carping attitude of *Magonia's* materialistic, stick-in-the-mud editors. Isn't it obvious that Thomas's 'leems' is in fact Dr Dee's notorious scrying device (no doubt Dee obtained it during his period in Manchester). It would appear, he says, that the Reddish family of Doddlestone and Grappenhall (heirs to the Boydell estates), took it back into their own possession from whence Hugh Brewer obtained it while doing masonry work on their property. He in turn gave it to Elias Ashmole at his Masonic initiation on the Warrington/Grappenhall border in 1642. It was in order to decipher Brewer's notes that the famous collection of scholars at Warrington Academy was established.

No doubt 'the leems' and Harwarden's book were among the documents stolen by Jean-Paul Marat from the Ashmolean Museum (on orders from Adam Weishaupt) after failing to find them at the Academy. Almost certainly copies still exist in Warrington, hence the presence of RAF Burtonwood (complete with rumours of underground bunkers filled with parts from crashed flying saucers and iced-up aliens), Daresbury Nuclear Physics Laboratory, British Nuclear Fuels, UK Atomic Energy Authority, numerous high-tech computer firms, and Winwick Hospital, wherein resides not just a captured alien in a locked room but, since his reckless attempt to perform the notorious ritual from Harrison's book of magic with Pammella Bordes (who she, Ed.) in Golden Square, none other than E.L.W. himself.

There he works on his 500,000 page *Quantum Commentary on the Notebooks of Hugo Rune*, with special reference to the controlled flux of tachyons and shadow photons between oscillating naked singularities, a work for which the world is definitely not ready. Most of the time he is studious and quiet, but he does have moments in which he claims he actually is Rune. And in the continuing unexplained absence of any word from Rune's amanuensis, how can we say otherwise?).

Peter Rogerson



Continued from Page 1 care of himself against the critical questioning he received, but was not helped by his self-appointed minder, a European representative for MUFON, who angrily deflected questions he disapproved of, often despite Moore's readiness to answer them.

'I'm co-ordinating sixteen European countries', the MUFON man informed me. 'Good luck!' I wished him, 'The European Community can't do it with a staff of thousands, and they're only trying to co-ordinate twelve.' 'Walt Andrus asked me to check these people out - he says they're all debunkers'. After the conference I asked him if he agreed with Andrus's evaluation. 'Some of these people are pathologically sceptical,' he concluded. Most of those people didn't seem too worried.

I hope in future issues of *Magonia* to publish translations of one or two of the papers presented at the conference to give our readers something of the flavour of the event. I recommend the fourth *Rencontre* to all *Magonia* readers. Lyon is a beautiful city, worth a visit in its own right, with a plethora of second-hand bookshops at which I managed to pick up a good selection of key French UFO books, and some splendid hotels. The conference centre is well equipped with comfortable rooms for guests. The presentations are excellent (in French but with texts distributed beforehand for those who read French better than they hear or speak it). There is good company and good food. Let's hope that next year the UK will be represented by more than your Editor and his wife (who, even as a non-ufologist, enjoyed it all!).

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